

double tapping (and other double entendres) by thenewromantics

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: ANYWAYS mike is an awkward bean child and i'd die for him, Alternate Universe - Modern Setting, F/M, and he really loves el but that's to be expected, basically the instagram au that no one asked for, but i am delivering, dustin and lucas are mentioned but not that much so that's why i didn't tag them, just a fun silly thing that makes me happy

Language: English

Characters: Eleven | Jane Hopper, Mike Wheeler, Will Byers

Relationships: Eleven | Jane Hopper/Mike Wheeler

Status: Completed

Published: 2018-03-17

Updated: 2018-03-17

Packaged: 2022-04-21 15:23:02

Rating: Teen And Up Audiences

Warnings: Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings

Chapters: 1

Words: 8,848

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

mike has done plenty of embarrassing things in his lifetime, but he's pretty sure accidentally liking a ninety six week old instagram picture posted by his best friend's future step sister takes the cake.

aka mike and el meet on instagram and still fall in love, just as they always do.

double tapping (and other double entendres)

Author's Note:

this randomly came to me about three days ago and quite frankly wouldn't leave me alone so i had to give in to the muse and just write it. when i started, i thought maybe it would be like 4k words, max, but this happened instead. it's kind of wordy but that's really just because mike doesn't know how to shut up.

anyways, this is just a fun, totally fluffy au thing that i had a lot of fun writing, so enjoy!

There are a lot of things that Mike Wheeler has done in his life that he wishes he could go back and erase. Sure, everyone has these moments, but Mike is pretty sure he takes the cake for the sheer amount of embarrassing things that he still lays awake at night thinking about.

Like when he called his teacher 'mom' in fifth grade, which is about four years after it stops being even a little bit acceptable to accidentally call your teacher anything besides their name. Or when he finally managed to buck up the courage to ask Sarah Peterson, his chemistry lab partner, to prom, only to slam her finger in the car door when they arrived at the dance, leaving her to never speak to him again. And then of course, there was the time during senior year of high school when he had alcohol for the first time and ended up vomiting all over Jennifer Hayes' parent's new rug, which not only got him and all of his friends kicked out of her party but also gave him a not so great reputation for the rest of high school.

So yeah, Mike's had his fair share of embarrassing, soul sucking moments before.

But he's pretty sure accidentally liking a ninety six week old post on his best friend's future step sister instagram profile takes the top spot of things that make him wish he had never been born to begin with.

The whole thing is Will's fault honestly. If Will had just filled him in on the fact that his mother was getting married and he was gaining a step sister, Mike might not have been so shocked when her face popped up on his Instagram feed.

He wasn't that much of a social media user, he really only started using it when him and his friends all moved off to different corners of the country, him in Boston, Will in Chicago, Lucas in Los Angeles and Dustin in Atlanta, and he supposed it was kind of fun to stalk his sister too, considering she never told him anything that was going on her life. But typically he stuck with being a scroller, his account was pretty bare, just a couple old pics with his friends, a family picture from Christmas, nothing oh too special.

Will, and subsequently all his other friends too, were much more active posters. They posted new pictures every other day it seemed, so he often found himself scrolling through his timeline, liking most of their pictures, happy to see that they were all living seemingly exciting lives.

On that day in particular, he was just finishing digesting the interesting picture of his sister sandwiched between two guys who he thought were her ex boyfriends when the picture that started this whole mess appeared. A picture that, at the risk of sounding overly dramatic, would change the course of Mike Wheeler's life forever.

The picture itself wasn't anything particularly special or scandalous. It was Will sitting side by side to a girl who looked to be about the same age as them, popsicles in their hands as they stuck their tongues out at the camera through their teeth, both of them with their eyes squinted and laughter present in the creases of their faces. Mike's own face crinkled in confusion as he tried to figure out who the girl in the picture was. He had certainly never seen her before (he would definitely remember a smile that wide and bright, that's for sure) and he couldn't remember Will mentioning anything about a girl in his life.

He knew for a fact it wasn't a girlfriend, Mike had been the first member of the party that Will had come out to back in tenth grade, so that *definitely* wasn't it. Maybe she was a new friend that Will had met in Chicago? Will had flourished after high school when it came to making friends so much so that if Mike had to bet money on it, he would say that Will probably had the widest social circle of all of them, so that was a definite possibility.

The caption of the picture really didn't clear *anything* up.

"byerswill: popsicles in january probably weren't the best choice." It reads, with a picture credit to his brother, Jonathan, following. If anything, the caption just makes him even more confused. He knew, thanks to his light stalking of his sister, that Jonathan had just gone home for a couple days, so maybe this was a girl who had just moved to Hawkins? But how would her and Will already be such good friends? And why hadn't Will said anything to him about her?

Before Mike can ponder the picture any further, there's a knock on his door and his attention shifts and the picture is forgotten.

At least for now.

While it's the first picture that sparks the initial confusion, and immediate interest if he's being completely honest, it's the picture that he sees a couple days ago that *really* starts this whole thing off.

(Of course, years down the line Mike would tell people that he knew as soon as he first saw her picture. She'd slap his arm and call him a liar, those same lines of laughter present in her cheeks and Mike would fall all the more in love with her.)

He's laying in bed, absentmindedly scrolling through his feed, liking the occasional picture and commenting a witty "*better hope you roll a thirteen*" on a post of Dustin's, when he sees her face again.

It's another post of Will's, unsurprisingly, this the girl is sitting on the

couch in the Byers' living room, squeezed between Will, who's grinning widely at the camera, and Jonathan, who's looking at his brother, a grin on his face. The girl is mid laughter, her head thrown back ever so slightly, her hand hooked around Jonathan's shoulder.

Unlike before, where Mike was content in just letting the moment on confusion pass, this time he *needs* to figure out who this girl is. Mostly because he can't believe Will would have this new girl in his life and just not tell any of them, because yeah sure they're all living in different cities but they're still friends and Mike thought if there was someone in Will's life that he clearly cared about, that he would share it with them.

However he's not going to lie and say that part of the reason he wants to find out who this girl is so badly is because isn't because he thinks she's incredibly pretty. It's not like he's going to try and “ *slide into her dms* ” (whatever the hell that meant, Dustin) or whatever, he just wants to know more about her.

So, he does what any normal person would do. He clicks on her tag and starts scrolling through her profile.

She doesn't have many pictures, especially not of her face. Her profile picture is her in front a window, her face obscured by sunglasses. According to her profile her name is El, and she likes the color pink and food that tastes sweet.

He can't help but smile at that, testing the way that her name sounds on his lips. “El.” he whispers to himself, the name rolling across his tongue with such ease that it feels like he's been saying her name for years.

His question of how she and Will know each other, aka the entire reason he clicked on her profile to begin with (ok not the *entire* reason, but it was a major contributing factor), however, was answered by her most recent post.

It was a picture of Will's mom with her arms around a man that Mike had never seen before, who was wearing a police chief's uniform. They were smiling at each other and when Mike looked more closely, he could see a small diamond ring on Mrs. Byers' finger.

After uncovering that piece of information, it didn't take too long for Mike to piece all the pieces together. He assumed that El (god, he didn't know someone's name could sound so pretty) was the daughter of the man with Will's mom, which would explain why she was spending time with Jonathan and Will. She was going to be their sister.

He had a crush on his best friend's future step sister.

Wait what?! No, he didn't have a crush. He didn't even know this girl, he had just learned her name. Just because he thought she was pretty and wanted to scroll through all her pictures so he could learn more about her did **not** mean that he had a crush on her. Right?

Pushing away that thought, because no he did not a crush, he could think a girl was cute without having a crush on her, he shook his head and continued scrolling through her account. Because crush or no crush, she was still going to be Will's sister and he wanted to learn more about her.

On par with his initial observation, she didn't have many pictures of her face, at least not many of just her face. There were a couple pictures of her and Will, quite a few with her and the man he assumed with her father, and more pictures of waffles than Mike had ever thought he would see in one place.

After a couple minutes of scrolling he stumbled across what looked to be a selfie. Clicking on it, he felt the air rush out of his lungs. All the previous pictures he had seen of her had been at weird angles, or when her face was scrunched up or covered by something, so seeing it up close literally took his breath away.

El was sitting next to a window, sun streaming in and accenting the side of her face. She was looking at the camera, a small smile on her face and Mike felt his own lips curl into a smile as he looked at her. He found that the longer he looked at the picture, the wider the smile on his face grew.

“elhopper: will only move away from sunlight for waffles” The caption reads and Mike audibly laughs. He's still chuckling lightly as he clicks back to her profile and continues to scroll. She doesn't post that

often, she's more frequent than he is, but less frequent than the rest of friends, so it doesn't take long for him to get to the bottom of her page.

The first picture ever posted on her profile is another selfie, and argues with himself about whether he should look at it. It looks quite a bit older than her more recent pictures, her hair (which had been past her shoulders in the first picture he had seen) was quite a bit shorter, not that he was paying any attention or anything.

Ultimately, his intrigue and curiosity wins over his basic common sense and he clicks on the picture. According to the timestamp, the picture is almost two years old, which surprises him. She looks so much *younger* in this picture. Her hair was just past her ears and the confident smile on her face was replaced with a more nervous grin, like she didn't quite know how to hold her face in a picture.

Mike still thought she looked pretty. Not that he would ever admit that.

He notices that the picture only has a couple of likes and that there's no caption which only makes him smile. His early experiences with Instagram had been pretty much the same, no captions, a couple pity likes from the guys, he knew how it was.

It's only when he goes to click out of her picture, pleased with what he had discovered while perusing her profile when the gene that seemed to be ingrained in him determined to embarrass him and ruin his life decides to come into play. He's moving to hit the little arrow in the corner when his phone slips from his hand and he tries to catch it with his fingers. Double tapping El's picture in the process.

It takes Mike about three minutes to start to panic.

He stares at his phone dumbly for about a minute and a half, not sure exactly how to process what just happened. The little, now red, heart

staring up at him, almost mockingly. The next minute and a half is spent clicking out of the app and holding his head in his hands before the panic settles in and he begins to freak out.

He knew how weird and creepy it was to like old pictures. Nancy had told him more than once that one of the creepiest things a guy could do is go back and like all her old pictures after they'd just met, and he hadn't even *met* this girl. God, she probably thought he was such a creep, she probably clicked on his profile, figured out he was friends with Will and was on the phone with Will right now to tell him how much a creep his best friend was.

He could kiss his potential invite to Will's mom's wedding goodbye.

After approximately five minutes of adequate freaking out and spiraling on Mike's end, he decides that he needs help. He knows by turning to his friends, he runs the risk of being made fun of for the rest of eternity, but hell, his friends would find something else to make fun of him for. He needed this girl to know that he definitely *wasn't* a creep.

Picking his phone up from its place on his bed, he opened the groupchat him and friends shared and types out his question.

the party

mike

have any of you guys accidentally liked a picture posted by someone you don't follow?

It takes about two minutes, the longest goddamn two minutes of his entire life for someone to get back to him and Mike swears he's never been more excited to see Dustin's name lighting up his phone screen.

dustin

trust me dude, i think we've all been there.

why do you ask michael? accidentally like a girl's pic when you were stalking her? ;)

Mike immediately retracts his previous statement, fuck Dustin.

Luckily, Lucas' name pops up only a moment later. Mike has always

trusted Lucas' advice, especially when it came to girls. Lucas was the only one of them that had had a steady girlfriend throughout high school, hell he was still the only one with a girlfriend, or anyone actually.

lucas

**jeez mike, your fingers slip or something
how old was the pic???**

Actually, you know what, fuck Lucas too.

mike

i hate both of you

He ponders leaving it just at that, dropping the conversation and figuring this out on his own. But then he realizes that he already figured out that he doesn't have a fucking clue what to do and despite his friends laughing at him, they might actually have some real advice. He's not going to put money on it, but they've surprised him before.

mike

and uhh....no comment

lucas

that old huh? whew that's rough man

dustin

unlike. unlike that picture right now mike. UNLIKE IT!

Mike groans at Dustin's dramatics, rolling his eyes.

mike

**how would unliking it help? they're still gonna get the
notification**

dustin

just trust me.

lucas

actually at this point you should just follow her

**mike
really?**

dustin

**lucas that is probably the dumbest thing you have ever said and
you've said some pretty dumb things over the years**

**lucas
oh bite me, henderson**

**mike
guys for the love of god please shut up**

Mike isn't really sure what he's expecting from either of them as a reply, but it certainly isn't what actually happens. No, what actually happens sends Mike nearly falling off of his bed, which sure, isn't exactly a rare occurrence but is still pretty noteworthy.

**will
actually lucas is right, el said she was gonna follow you anyway
so you might as well follow her back.**

And sure enough, as soon as Mike finishes reading Will's message, his heart slamming against his ribcage, he gets a notification from instagram across the top of his phone.

elhopper has started following you!

Mike really shouldn't be surprised when his phone rings the next day with Will on the other end. He is a little surprised that the call took this long to come, he had spent most of the night before anticipating Will's inquires about what the hell he was doing with his life. Not that Mike really had any an answer, he was just as confused about the turn his life had taken in the last twenty four hours as anyone else would be.

He's the middle of eating when his phone buzzes next to him and he almost chokes on his food in a desperate attempt to swallow quickly so he can answer.

"Hello?" He wheezes out when he hits answer, his throat burning. He can hear Will chuckling on the other end and the sound is like honey to his ears, considering he was half expecting Will to immediately start yelling at him for being such a creep to his future sister. Mike had never heard Will yell before, but there was a first time for anything.

"Everything alright over there?" Will asks after a moment, amusement clear in his tone.

"Ha. Ha." Mike deadpans, running his hand over his face before pushing his plate away from him. He knows what this phone call is going to be about, but he decides to ask anyway. "What's up, Will?"

The next words out of Will's mouth cause Mike to almost drop his phone.

"I'm calling to say sorry, I bet you want some kind of explanation." Definitely not what Mike was expecting, that's for sure.

"I mean, an explanation would be nice, but I kinda feel like I need to apologize. I pulled a total creep move and probably freaked her out." Mike doesn't feel comfortable calling by her name just yet, even though he totally knows it and it's been running on a loop in his head for twelve hours straight, considering he still doesn't technically know her.

Will laughs again, "She's not freaked out, I promise. She was a little confused sure, but once I told her who you were it was fine." Mike breathes out a huge bubble of air that he didn't even realize had been lodged in his chest. "She even said that she thought you were cute."

If Mike had been drinking water he would have spit it out. Or choked and probably died.

He doesn't even have time to process what Will has just said before he starts talking again.

"I suppose I should explain why I hadn't told you, or any of the other guys, about her."

"I mean, yeah, only if you want to. I'm sure you have your reasons." Mike says even though he wants to scream 'YES' because there's a very good chance that he could have avoided all of this awkwardness and embarrassment if he had known who she was. Of course, he probably would have still embarrassed himself eventually, but a little warning might have been nice.

Will takes a deep breath before speaking, "When my mom and Jim started dating, she didn't want anyone to know in case it all fell apart or went south, so I kept her secret. He lives a couple towns over from Hawkins, and so does El, so she wasn't around when you guys all came home for Christmas. When Jim proposed to my mom, it just slipped my mind to tell you guys because I was so excited for her, besides it just happened like two weeks ago."

Mike nods as Will reaches a break in his story. He knows Will can't see him, but Will has a weird sixth sense and probably can feel Mike's reaction through the phone even if he doesn't say anything.

"Also, when I mentioned you guys to El, she got a little freaked out, she was homeschooled and takes online classes, so I think the idea of meeting three strange guys didn't appeal to her that much. I promise I wasn't trying to like keep her a secret or anything."

"Oh." Mike says simply, absorbing this new information. That would explain why Will and her dad were really the only people that Mike saw on El's profile the night before. It hadn't really stuck out to him before, that she didn't have any pictures with any friends or anything, but now it all made sense. "I get it Will, don't worry."

"Thanks, Mike." Will says softly, and Mike smiles.

There's a few of beat of silence between them, Mike still thinking about everything Will just told him, and Will's breathing steady and calm on the other end. Mike's about to ask a question (as casually as one person who *definitely* has a crush on the other person's step sister to be) about El, but Will's voice breaks the silence first.

“So, you think El’s cute?”

Oh *dear god* how Mike wants to die. He wants the floor of his apartment to open up and swallow him and then spit his bones back out so his mom has something to remember him by. He has to resist the urge to slam his head on the table, instead settling to just let out a strangled “ugh” as he throws his head in his free hand.

“I have no idea what you’re talking about.” He finally manages to get out.

“There’s no shame in it Mike, I know you do and it’s not like the feeling isn’t mutual.” This time Mike does drop his head down to the table, letting out a muffled groan, which only causes Will to chuckle.

“So, she really doesn’t think I’m a creep?” He says after a couple seconds of silence. The question is kind of pathetic, and Will is going to see right through him but he’s more concerned with what El thinks of him than Will knowing about his stupid crush.

“I promise you, she doesn’t think you’re a creep. This conversation would have gone very differently if she thought you were a creep trust me.” Will says with a laugh and Mike’s stomach churns. He’s definitely glad that the conversation went the way it did.

“Cool, cool, cool, cool.” Mike rambles.

He hears Will talking to someone on the other hand, his voice muffled. The other voice is a female voice that definitely *isn’t* his mom, and Mike’s mouth goes dry. That has to be El, there’s no one else it could be, which causes his heart to flutter.

God he needs to get himself together.

“I gotta go Mike, family bonding and all that but I’ll talk to you later.” Will says, his voice snapping Mike from his weird haze after hearing El’s voice. Will doesn’t let Mike respond before he speaks again. “And hey, Mike?”

“Yeah?”

“Stop being weird and just follow El back already, she thinks you

hate her.”

Will hangs up before Mike can say another word.

About ten minutes later Mike hits the follow button on El’s account, his hands shaking, but a satisfied smile crossing his face all the same.

The next couple weeks are uneventful when it comes to his interactions with El on instagram.

She posts a couple of things, and Mike likes some of them. A picture of her with Will’s dog, her and Will’s mom on the porch, wide smiles, holding glasses of iced tea and wearing matching pink sunglasses. He doesn’t like some of her pictures, her and her dad in his police cruiser, a couple food pictures, but his heart still flutters when her name flashes across his feed, or he sees her wide smile and bright brown eyes.

It’s wildly pathetic how excited he gets, honestly.

However, his pathetic excitement, complete with wide grinning, blushing cheeks and a fluttering stomach, when he sees her on his feed is absolutely nothing compared to the absolute palm sweating, heart pounding elation he feels when her username appears in his notifications.

See, it all starts when Mike posts a picture of himself.

That in itself is already pretty rare, he has maybe three pictures total on his entire account that are just him (mainly because he *hates* every single picture of himself ever taken), but he had gotten his picture taken with Stephen *fucking* King, aka his favorite author of all time, so there was no way he wasn’t going to post it on Instagram. Dustin was going to be so jealous.

So, that's what he does.

“ **wheelermike** : *the king of horror himself, luckily there were no red balloons in sight* ” Sure the caption is dumb, but it gets his point across, while also being slightly clever and throwing in a good reference for safe keeping.

As expected, Dustin responds with jealousy and Will just comments with a million exclamation points, which both make him laugh. But what he doesn't expect is for El to like it, about two hours after he's posted it.

By the time he gets the notification, he had almost completely forgotten about the post. He had set his phone down to try and get some homework done, so when he picks it up to give himself a little break, his heart soars in his chest when he sees her username. Sure, it's just a like, but it's still the most interaction he's had from her end since she followed him, so that alone sends his entire body into overdrive.

He's able to ignore it for the time being and go back to his homework, even though his eyes keep shifting over at his phone and his skin is buzzing with anticipation. Turns out, his anticipation was for good reason because about ten minutes later his phone is lighting up again and the notification takes the wind right out of him.

el hopper has sent you a message!

It's not the first time that Mike has ever gotten an instagram direct message before, Dustin seems to use the feature strictly to send Mike DnD memes, but it's the first time he's gotten one from someone he's never talked to before.

(Which seems kind of crazy to him, that technically speaking him and El haven't actually talked before, even though he feels like he knows her and *god* he wants to actually know her so badly, but he has no idea how to start that process.)

About five minutes passes, five minutes full of pacing and a large amount of perspiration gathering in the nape of his neck under his curls, before he finally works up the courage to open the message.

He's afraid at first, about what the message could say, fearing that it might be, that she might be telling him that now that she's seen a real picture of his face, she retracts her earlier statement of him being cute. A statement which still boggles Mike's mind, but he's not going to complain about it.

(Of course he doesn't *actually* think that El would say something like that to him, but years of being called "frogface", never having anyone express any romantic interest in him and general middle child anxiety about being a failure bring those kinds of fears on, even if he knows they aren't true.)

However, the message is none of the things his anxiety ridden mind has made him believe and in fact, is pretty tame all things considered. He feels like a fucking idiot.

elhopper:

i can't believe you met stephen king! he's my favorite author, i'm officially jealous.

The message brings a smile to his face, and not just because it's *not* an insult, but rather it's a new thing that he's learned about her. Something that he didn't even have to scroll through her account to try and find, or something he learned from Will. It's something she decided to share with him. Not to mention, it's something they have in common.

wheelermike:

he's your favorite author too??

The conversation continues from there, and before Mike knows it, him and El have been talking for almost three hours. His homework has been completely abandoned, his textbook having slid from the couch and falling to the floor with a resounding and finite *thud*. He hardly even cares.

Because it turns out, El is like the easiest person in the entire world to talk to. At first he was afraid it would be weird, but it's not. It's as easy as breathing, him and El converse like they've known each other for years, not literal minutes. They start with talking about Stephen King, an easy topic considering it's why she messaged him in the first

place and it's something they have in common, before shifting to other books and movies they enjoy.

**(wheeler mike:
you've never seen star wars?!?)**

**el hopper:
i know, i know, will already gave me the lecture about it, i'm sorry!**

**wheeler mike:
wow. i'm truly shocked. i don't even think i can continue having this conversation.)**

He finds out that Carrie is her favorite Stephen King novel because she likes that it teaches people to be kind, because you never know what someone might be going through. He also learns that waffles are her favorite food in the world, something he could have guessed but he still smiles when she tells him, and that she's been learning about photography and music, two topics she didn't have any knowledge in before meeting Jonathan.

He drinks in any knowledge he can about her, filing it away in his brain, desperate to learn more, as much as he can actually, and even more desperate to fast forward in time to when all this knowledge about her will be useful.

In return, he tells her about how even though Stephen King is his favorite author, Lord of the Rings is actually his favorite book and what jump started his lifelong love of fantasy novels. He also rambles off little details about him, like how he eats his eggs with syrup, a fact in which is met with skepticism, a little bit disgust but also curiosity paired with the words *'hm, i'll have to try that sometime'* or how he lucked out on getting an apartment in a busy city without any kind of roommate because he moved into an apartment that used to have rats so no one wanted to live there.

Their conversation doesn't reveal any earth shattering information, but it's easily one of the best conversations that Mike has ever had, a fact in which he doesn't take lightly.

So when he's crawling into bed two hours after reading El's departing message of *'goodbye, mike'* there's a wide smile on his face that he doesn't see going away anytime soon.

From there, it doesn't take long for El to become one of his closest friends.

Sure, they still haven't talked outside of instagram, he doesn't even have her phone number, but their direct message conversations become more frequent, with them exchanging at least a couple words with each other every other day or so.

(elhopper:

will tried to explain dungeons and dragons to me today and i was very confused, how do you remember all those rules??

wheeler mike:

lots and lots of years of not having anything else to do on friday nights

...

wheeler mike:

just had the best waffles in the entire world on a scale of 1-10 how jealous are you right now

elhopper:

eleven.)

El also likes almost all of his posts, and he does the same for her. Even if it's something he doesn't understand, it always makes him smile, which definitely counts for something, if not everything. Occasionally she'll also comment, usually just something simple like *'haha'* on a picture of his mismatched socks, or *'yum!'* when he documents his first successful attempt at making something edible all

on his own.

It never fails to make his heart flutter when it happens.

Having El has a friend is *nice* . He's never really been friends with girls before, mainly because girls found his repulsive in high school and he's had trouble socializing with just about everyone in college, so it's different, but it's nice. Of course there's also the fact that he's pretty sure he's falling for her more and more every day, but he's able to ignore that most of the time.

(Okay that's a lie, he sucks at ignoring it, but he does his best to not make it too obvious that he's hiding back a girlish squeal of excitement whenever she messages him, even if he's pretty sure he fails every single time. El's either too nice to say anything or she genuinely doesn't notice. He hopes it's the latter.)

So yeah, he loves being friends with El.

He also thinks he might actually be in love with her but that's neither here nor there.

His invitation for Mrs. Byers' wedding arrives on a Saturday in the middle of February.

The date is listed for a weekend in late May, a couple weeks after the party will all be graduated and done with college. Mike smiles, genuinely happy for Will's mom, who had dedicated the last twenty something years of her life on her kids and deserved to have someone in her life who loved her.

Mike's just finished hanging the invitation on his fridge next to his take out menus when he notices another piece of paper sticking out from the envelope. Pulling it out with knitted eyebrows, his lips morph into a smile when he pulls the folded lined paper out and reads the words written on it.

can't wait to meet you! - el

He doesn't think he's ever been so excited to go back to Hawkins.

The next couple months go by in the blink of an eye but also seem to drag on and feel like years.

Him and El still message a lot, now almost every single day. He still hasn't gotten her phone number, but he doesn't mind. As their friendship progressed, he started to learn more about her, things that she told him that only Will knew about her.

There had been one particularly intense night in the middle of March when she had opened up about her dad was actually her adoptive dad and she had been in and out of foster care her entire childhood before Jim (or Hop as El sometimes called him in her messages), found her on the side of the road after she had escaped from her current foster home. Not for the first time Mike wished that he could be there with her in person as she told him that.

And in turn, Mike shares things with her. Like about how he was afraid of failing his parents, and about how his dad had never once said anything about being proud of him. Mike hadn't even realized how much he was spilling into his messages until he was wiping tears from his eyes after they fell onto his phone screen. The words that El shares with him after that particular experience is the moment that Mike realizes that he loves this girl.

elhopper:

i know i'm not your dad but i'm proud of you, mike. i'll tell you every day if you want me to.

He almost cries. Scratch that, he does cry. Granted he was already crying, but his eyes go blurry when he reads her message, a sob choking out from his throat and he bites down on his lip, hard, when a smile breaks out across his lips.

May can't come faster, when he can finally look her in the eyes, eyes that he's memorized by looking at her pictures, with their light brown hue and golden specks, and tell her how much her words mean to him.

wheelermike:

you're something else, el hopper, you know that?

elhopper:

haha, yeah, i know. but thank you.

Mike doesn't tell Will, Dustin or Lucas, but he's pretty sure that El is his best friend. It feels, strange, to consider someone he's never actually even met before to be his best friend over the three friends who have been there for him since childhood. In fact, the word best friend doesn't even feel big enough to describe what El has come to mean to him in the last couple months.

And to think, it all happened because he accidentally liked one of her pictures.

Luckily, she never brings that particular memory up, instead she tells him how much she loves talking to him and how comfortable she feels sharing things with him, and the feeling is mutual. Talking to El, and sharing intimate details of his life with her, are as easy as breathing, at this point it feels as second nature as his heart beating.

He's pretty sure the word he might be looking for to describe her is *soulmate* but he would never tell her that. So, for now he settles on best friend, and that'll have to be enough.

The weekend of Byers and Hopper (Joyce and Jim, that is) comes before Mike knows it.

He flies home a couple days before Saturday, but he spends those

days mainly with his mom, who keeps hugging him out of the blue and telling him how much she missed him, and his younger sister, Holly, who complains endlessly about how little freedom she has now that Mom doesn't have any other kids to focus on. It make Mike happy, being around his family (sans his dad, who mysteriously is going to be away pretty much the entire time Mike is home), but the whole time, his body is buzzing with anticipation about meeting El, and his mind is always wandering to what she might be doing and if she's just as nervous about meeting him as he is her.

(The note she wrote him, and sent with his invitation, sits in the front pocket of his backpack and he reads it every night before he goes to bed, a grin on his face and a warm pool of adoration in his heart.)

Will had texted all the party members as soon as they had descended on Hawkins to tell them that last minute wedding planning was all he could focus on, so he wouldn't be able to see any of them until the wedding itself. Mike took the hint that that also meant that El would be busy until the wedding too, delaying their meeting. While Mike one hundred percent understood, he was nervous and anxious and as every day dragged on and Saturday became closer and closer, he only went further and further into full on freak out mood.

The day of the wedding finally arrives and Mike thought he was going to vomit.

He suddenly understood why he had never thought about trying online dating. The idea of meeting someone who you had such a strong connection to, even if you had never seen them in person before, was absolutely *terrifying* and as he stood in his bathroom mirror, fixing his hair and fiddling with his collared shirt, he starts panicking. What if El is disappointed by him? What if she takes one look at him and realizes that she spent all this time sharing her secrets and getting to know someone who was actually the biggest loser on the face of the planet.

No, that's not going to happen. He reminds himself, shaking his head. *She already knows you're a weird loser and she still talks to you.*

It's almost as if she can read his mind because not three seconds later, his phone lights up from it's position on the side of the sink, the all

familiar *elhopper* has sent you a message! notification bright across the screen. He almost drops it into the sink with excitement.

elhopper:
i'm so excited for today! see you soon!

She always knows exactly what to say is his last thought as he exits his bathroom, grabbing his wallet and keys before rushing out the door, his heart hammering faster and faster with every step that he takes.

It takes a couple hours after arriving at the Byers house before he actually gets to see El, and even longer after that before they actually get to meet.

Mike gets roped into helping Steve Harrington set up the remainder of the folding chairs (perks of being the first party member to arrive, he supposes), while Will and El help his mom get ready and Jonathan and Jim make sure everything is running smoothly. It's kind of awkward, setting up chairs with his sister's ex, but they get the job done and before long Dustin and Lucas show up and the three of them stand awkwardly near back row of chairs, waiting for the all clear to take their seats.

The wedding is small and Mike knows pretty much everyone there, excluding a couple officers that work with El's dad, but despite how many times he scans everyone, he fails to spot El's brown head of curls. He knew from what she had told him that she was Joyce's maid of honor, so that meant he probably wouldn't actually get to see her until she walked down the aisle, a thought that both excited him and terrified him at the same time.

"Who are you looking for?" Dustin finally asked after Mike had made his fourth scan in the last ten minutes, more out of habit and nerves than anything else at this point.

“What? Nothing.”

“Dude, what the hell is wrong with you?” Lucas adds, scrunching his eyebrows together. “You look like you’re about to vomit.”

“I’m fine.” He definitely feels like he’s going to vomit, but the last thing he wants to do is tell Dustin and Lucas about how he’s pretty much in love with Will’s about to be step sister even though she’s never actually met her person.

Luckily he’s saved from any questions by Jonathan appearing at the front of the aisle, nodding at them. They take their seats and Mike takes a deep breath. *This is it.* The music starts and El’s dad takes his spot next to Jonathan and before Mike has a chance to form any kind of coherent thought he sees her.

God, her pictures did not do her justice.

El, who he immediately recognizes by the way her eyes are lit up and her smile is wide and bright, practically glides down the aisle. She’s wearing a purple dress which brushes up against her knees and her curly brown hair is sitting in a simple updo on the top of her head and Mike swears he’s never seen anyone more beautiful in his entire life.

He almost misses Joyce walking down the aisle because he’s too busy staring at El, who he’s almost convinced is an angel, because there’s no way anyone could actually be that pretty. Sure, she looks pretty in every picture he’s ever seen of her, but seeing her in person is something else entirely.

If Dustin and Lucas didn’t know he was in love with her before, they definitely did now.

He watches her throughout the entire ceremony. He doesn’t stare, because while she didn’t think he was a creep when he accidentally like a two year old picture of her, she might if she catches his eyes boring into her and never wavering. But, his eyes keep finding her again, too drawn to her beauty and light to focus on anything else for too long.

She's too busy smiling at her dad and Joyce to notice him, though, and with good reason. The wedding is beautiful and him and the guys all elbow each other when they see Will crying, even though they're all discreetly wiping their eyes when the union is finally made official.

When the wedding party files out, Mike ignores the stares from Dustin and Lucas and follows the rest of the guests inside, the anticipation growing with every minute that passes.

His hands are shaking and there's sweat gathering in the small of his back, under the fabric of his button down, but his heart is bursting with adoration for this girl and he wants to do something about it.

He has to wait hours for his moment to come. But it finally does.

Toasts are made, El's dad gets the crowd laughing and Will makes them all cry, and dancing is had and Mike never gets a moment alone with El. She stays attached to Will's side, who subsequently stays attached to Jonathan's side, which leaves Mike with Dustin and Lucas, not that he minds.

It's after the party has started to wind down and everyone who's either not related or not a party member has gone home. Mike is standing on the back porch, a glass of warm champagne in his hand when he feels a presence beside him.

"You're much prettier in person. I didn't know you had so many freckles." The voice says, and Mike feels himself involuntarily blush and he turns to look at her.

El has changed out of her bridesmaid dress and is now wearing a simple t shirt and jean shorts, some kind of shawl wrapped around her shoulders, and if possible she looks even prettier than she had before. He can't keep the smile off his face.

"I don't think anyone has ever called me pretty before." He manages

to say.

“I know that handsome is typically the word applied to men who are good looking, but I feel like pretty suits you much better.” Mike isn’t really sure if he should be insulted that she basically said he wasn’t handsome, but she’s not done. “I like pretty.”

Oh yeah, he’s definitely in love with this girl. This girl and her beautiful smile and her warm eyes who is probably the best person he’s ever met. It doesn’t even feel like he’s meeting her for the first time, it feels like he’s coming home after a really long time of being away, twenty two years to be exact.

He grins sheepishly. “I like pretty too.” He says, before realizing he’s missing a couple words to properly return the compliment. “Which you definitely are.”

She grins, a light blush on her cheeks. “It’s weird.” Her gaze drifts to the yard in front of him. “How I feel like I’ve known you for my entire life, even though this is literally the first time I’ve ever seen you in person.” He’s so glad he’s not the alone in that feeling.

“Yeah, I know what you mean.” They stand in silence for a couple moments, Mike inching closer to her, her energy intoxicating and warm and infectious. “Who would have known that accidentally liking someone’s instagram post would make something like this happen.”

She laughs and Mike’s heart soars. “So it was an accident, here I was thinking that you were trying to get my attention.” Her tone is teasing and affectionate and Mike can’t help but laugh right along with her.

“I hate to break it to you but it definitely was an accident, I wish I could say that I was naturally bold enough to do that but truth be told it was the scariest moment of my life. I thought you were going to think I was some kind of creep.” Mike admits, which makes El smile.

“I would never think you’re a creep. Even when all you were was the guy who liked a ninety six week old instagram picture of mine, I

knew you weren't a creep." Mike can tell that her words are genuine and the ever growing pool of affection he feels for her expands, so much so that he thinks he might explode.

He smiles. "Well, I appreciate that. But no, it was an accident, you can thank my clumsy hands for that one." He brings the glass in his hand up to his lips, taking a small sip, cringing as the bitter taste hits his tongue, which causes El to smile.

"In that case," she adjusts herself, matching his stance so they're looking at each other. Head bending down, she moves her mouth to his hands and before Mike even has time to be confused she whispers, "thank you" and it's just about the cutest thing Mike has ever seen.

It also is hilarious though, because he towers over her (something he didn't realize until they were side by side, but something he kind of loves) so she barely has to bend in order to be eye level to his hands. So he lets out a deep laugh, and she does too.

Mike could stand there forever, just listening to her laugh. But the laughter eventually dies and they've both moved their bodies, Mike crouched over, hand on the railing and El leaning next to him and their lips are only inches away. He wonders if what he thinks it about to happen is actually going to happen, he wants it to, oh does he want it to, but he doesn't know if she does.

She answers his unasked questions though, and closes the distance between them, pressing her lips to his and everything falls into place.

His body explodes with electricity, his hand dropping the glass, barely registering when it shatters next to him on the ground. El's arms wrap around his neck and his fall to her waist and his lips move against hers like it's what they were always made to do. And maybe they were.

He's not sure exactly how long they stand there, but he's out of breath when they finally pull apart. El's complexion is flushed and her lips are swollen, so he can only imagine he looks the same.

She lets out a breathy smile and Mike resists the urge to laugh. He

had antagonized over this moment, thought about for hours on end, and he really had absolutely nothing to worry about.

“I would double tap this moment.” He whispers after a couple seconds of blissful silence, El’s eyes never leaving his. The comment is meant to be a joke about how they first came into each other’s lives, but as El’s face twists into confusion and probably a little bit of disbelief, Mike realizes the double meaning of his words. “Oh my god.” He groans, throwing his head back. “That is so not what I meant.”

Luckily El only laughs, shaking her head and pulling his face back towards hers. “No, I know what you meant, I never realized how dirty it sounded until someone said it out loud.”

“Yeah me neither.” He frowns. “I am never saying that phrase out loud ever again.”

“Well, if it makes you feel any better, I would double tap this moment too.” She grins and relief spreads through his entire body, so much so that he leans forward to kiss her again. It’s short and sweet, but it means more, he thinks. Because El smiles against his kiss and he knows that every single thing he’s felt towards her in the last five months is reciprocated and that’s all he could have ever asked for.

When he pulls away he leans his forehead against hers and decides that if he had to pick a moment to live in forever, it would be this one.

Two weeks later El comes to Boston to visit him.

He doesn’t know if they’re dating (their post wedding kiss conversations hadn’t really gotten to that stage) but they talk every day and it feels like they are. Either way, Mike feels like the words boyfriend and girlfriend are too small for them anyway. What he feels for El is indescribable and he doesn’t think they’ll ever be a

word big enough for it.

They spend the weekend doing all the tourist stuff that Mike's never done by himself and Mike kisses her more times than he can count. Each time she smiles and laughs, nuzzling her forehead against him. And sometimes she kisses him first.

It's the best weekend of his entire life and twenty minutes after he's hugged her goodbye at airport security when she tags him in a photo on instagram, he grins.

It's the two of them in front of Faneuil Hall, El smiling widely at the camera and Mike smiling at El, and Mike's heart warms at the sight. She had been so excited and Mike had been unable to keep his eyes off her. His eyes then drift to the caption and he doesn't think he's ever double tapped something faster in his entire life.

“elhopper: best weekend of my life with the best person i've ever met.”

Okay, so maybe he lied earlier.

Accidentally liking El Hopper's, his best friend's step sister and the love of his life, photo was the best thing he'd ever done in his entire life.

Author's Note:

this fic definitely got away from me, but it was super fun to write. i love modern fics, so it was fun to play around with their dynamics what not in this setting.

anyways, i hope you all enjoyed this! i promise that chapter 3 of the figure skating au is coming soon, but hopefully this does the trick for now! lemme know what you thought of this, thanks friends!